

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3612

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 25565

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PFOR, FR

SUBJECT: POMPIDOU'S PRESS CONFERENCE REMARKS ON THE USSR
AND DETENTE

REF: PARIS 25405

1. SUMMARY. IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 27, POMPIDOU SOUNDED A NOTE OF CAUTION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS. WHILE HE ENDORSED DETENTE WITH THE USSR BOTH ON THE PART OF FRANCE AND THE US, HE CALLED FOR VIGILANCE TO MAKE SURE FRENCH INTERESTS, AND ABOVE ALL ITS INDEPENDENCE WERE PROTECTED. ON THE WHOLE, HE PROJECTED A FRENCH POLICY OF BALANCE, FREEDOM OF ACTION, AND DETERMINATION TO STRENGTHEN MILITARY SECURITY. END SUMMARY.

2. ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS, POMPIDOU SAID THEIR EVOLUTION HAD CHANGED MANY THINGS. WHILE WELCOMING THAT WHICH CONCERNED DETENTE AND PEACE, HE SAID "WE CANNOT HELP BUT ASK QUESTIONS TO WHICH WE ARE GIVEN REASSURING ANSWERS." HE SAID THAT
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ALL POSSIBILITIES MUST BE ENVISAGED AND CITED THE POSSIBLE

DANGER OF US-SOVIET RAPPROCHEMENT LEADING TO A KIND OF "CONDOM-INIUM OR NEUTRALIZATION OF EUROPE." NOTING THAT EVERYONE, THE AMERICANS AND SOVIETS EQUALLY, HAD AFFIRMED TO HIM THAT THERE WAS NOTHING IN HIS, HE NEVERTHELESS CALLED FOR FRENCH VIGILANCE IN PURSUING ITS OWN EFFORT TOWARD INDEPENDENCE AND NATIONAL DEFENSE.

3. IN RESPONDING TO AN IZVESTIA CORRESPONDENT, POMPIDOU CITED COMMON FRENCH-SOVIET INTERESTS IN DEVELOPING A POLICY OF DETENTE, ENTENTE AND COOPERATION "IN THE PRESENT SITUATION," BUT PREFACED HIS ANSWER WITH THE CAVEAT THAT "IN FOREIGN POLICY THINGS CAN ALWAYS CHANGE."

4. ON CHINA TRIP POMPIDOU SAID THAT AMONG THE POINTS ON WHICH THERE WAS PROFOUND AGREEMENT WITH FRANCE WAS "THE NECESSITY FOR A VIGILANT NATIONAL DEFENSE" AND THE REFUSAL OF HEGEMONY AND SUBMISSION OF ANY KIND. HE RECOGNIZED A DIFFERENCE OF VIEW BETWEEN FRANCE AND CHINA CONCERNING THE SOVIET UNION, EXPLAINING THIS BY THE LONG SINO-SOVIET BORDER AND IDEOLOGICAL WAR. CHINA, HE ADDED, CANNOT HAVE "EXACTLY" THE SAME VIEWPOINT AS FRANCE, WHICH HAD RESOLUTELY UNDERTAKEN A POLICY OF ENTENTE WITH THE EAST WHICH IT INTENDED TO PURSUE, WHILE REMAINING INDEPENDENT AND VIGILANT.

5. IN ARGUING THE CASE FOR CONTINUED FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTING AND DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT POMPIDOU REFERRED TO SALT TO REBUT THOSE WHO WOULD DERIDE THE CONCEPT OF DETERRENCE. SHOWING THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE BASIC PURPOSE OF THE ABM TREATY, HE STATED THAT SALT HAD PROVED THAT DETERRENCE EXISTS AND IS FUNDAMENTAL SINCE THE TWO STRONGEST POWERS HAD VOLUNTARILY LIMITED THEIR ABMS, RECOGNIZING THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO BE MUTUALLY VULNERABLE AND THEREBY ACCEPT RISK IN ORDER TO LESSEN IT.

6. COMMENT: POMPIDOU'S MESSAGE FOR THE SOVIETS SEEMED TO BE THAT FRANCE WELCOMES CONTINUED GOOD RELATIONS ON THE BASIS OF THE LONG-TIME FORMULA OF DETENTE, ENTENTE AND COOPERATION. HOWEVER, IT WILL JEALOUSLY GUARD ITS FREEDOM OF ACTION BY STRENGTHENING ITS INDEPENDENT DETERRENT AND BY PURSUING AN INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY EVEN WHEN, AS IN THE CASE OF CHINA, CONFIDENTIAL

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IT IMPINGES ON SOVIET SENSITIVITIES.
IRWIN

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